

DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL

Service Secretaries Receive 'Don't Ask' Repeal Plan

By Karen Parrish
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WASHINGTON, Feb. 11, 2011 – Pentagon officials today sent the Defense Department's implementation plan for repeal of the law commonly known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" to the service secretaries with a March 1 deadline for their first progress update.

Clifford L. Stanley, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, issued the plan, which outlines the stages of action, including those actions that must be completed before the department reverses the policy barring people who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual from serving openly in the military.

During a Jan. 28 news conference on the implementation plan's progress, Stanley stressed that Defense Department officials had coordinated closely with the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard to craft a plan designed to ensure the continued smooth operation of the services during repeal.

"We are fundamentally focused right now on our leadership, professionalism, discipline and respect," he said.

The plan issued today closely follows previously released guidance on implementing repeal. The plan does not give dates for the implementation phases; defense officials repeatedly have said the process will be "conditions-based" and will go forward based on the services' progress, including the training of their people and updating policies.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates' initial guidance stressed the importance of "strong, engaged and informed leadership" at every level to implement the repeal, which he said should take place "properly, effectively, and in a deliberate and careful manner."

"This is not, however, a change that should be done incrementally," the secretary's guidance said. "The steps leading to certification and the actual repeal must be accomplished across the entire department at the same time."

The pre-repeal phase of the plan released today, now under way, focuses on training the force and setting up channels for services to report progress to the Pentagon and the White House. The Defense Department distributed training toolkits to the services Feb. 4.

Defense officials said all of the services participated in developing the training, and each can adapt the basic package. Training materials are designed to be usable in low bandwidth and nontraditional

training settings, and include presentation slides with narration, scripts, frequently asked questions, vignettes, DoD policy guidance, Supplemental Plan for Implementation and Service specific material. Training is centered around the themes of Leadership, Professionalism, Discipline and Respect. The plan directs the services to submit reports every two weeks, beginning March 1, on units and people trained and regulations updated.

Preparation for certification will begin when, in addition to other objective and subjective criteria, all policies are updated and the first two tiers of service member training are complete. The first tier includes policy makers, chaplains, lawyers and counselors, and the second covers commanding officers, senior noncommissioned officers and senior civilians. The plan also stipulates that prior to certification tier three training for all remaining service members must be under way, with a preparation in place for training completion.

Certification will culminate in the secretary of defense and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff certifying to the president, as commander in chief, that the department is ready to implement the repeal. By law, when the president, secretary and chairman have all certified the services are ready for the policy change, a further 60 days must elapse before the new policy takes place. During implementation, the services will continue tier three training, begin sustainment training, and monitor the effects of implementation. The services and Defense Department also will continue to prepare progress reports.

The plan outlines ongoing sustainment to begin after repeal, during which policy reviews, training programs and monitoring assessments will continue and be refined as needed.

For related information you may go to these links:

Gates Outlines 'Don't Ask' Repeal Process

<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=62370>

President Signs 'Don't Ask' Repeal Act Into Law

<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=62213>